

Movie

Coherence 2013 Movie Explained

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“Coherence” is a mind-bending film that explores the concept of alternate realities and their intertwining effects on a group of eight friends at a dinner party. The protagonist, Emily, is continuously followed throughout the film, starting and ending with the original Emily. The film is filled with spoilers and assumes the viewer has watched it.

Here’s a comprehensive explanation of the plot, summary, and the film’s core concepts:



Summary of “Coherence”

The Premise

On the night a comet passes overhead, eight friends at a dinner party experience a troubling chain of events. Reality itself begins to fracture, forcing them to question their identities and trust in one another as they confront their alternate selves.

Character Relationships & Tensions

The group's dynamics are strained even before reality breaks. Pre-existing tensions, secrets, and insecurities fuel the paranoia that follows.

Emily

Insecure about career & Kevin

Kevin

Emily's boyfriend, ex is Laurie

Laurie

Kevin's ex, now with Amir

Amir

Brought Laurie to the party

Mike

Struggling actor, recovered alcoholic

Lee

Mike's wife, successful career

Beth

Spiritualist, had affair with Mike

Hugh

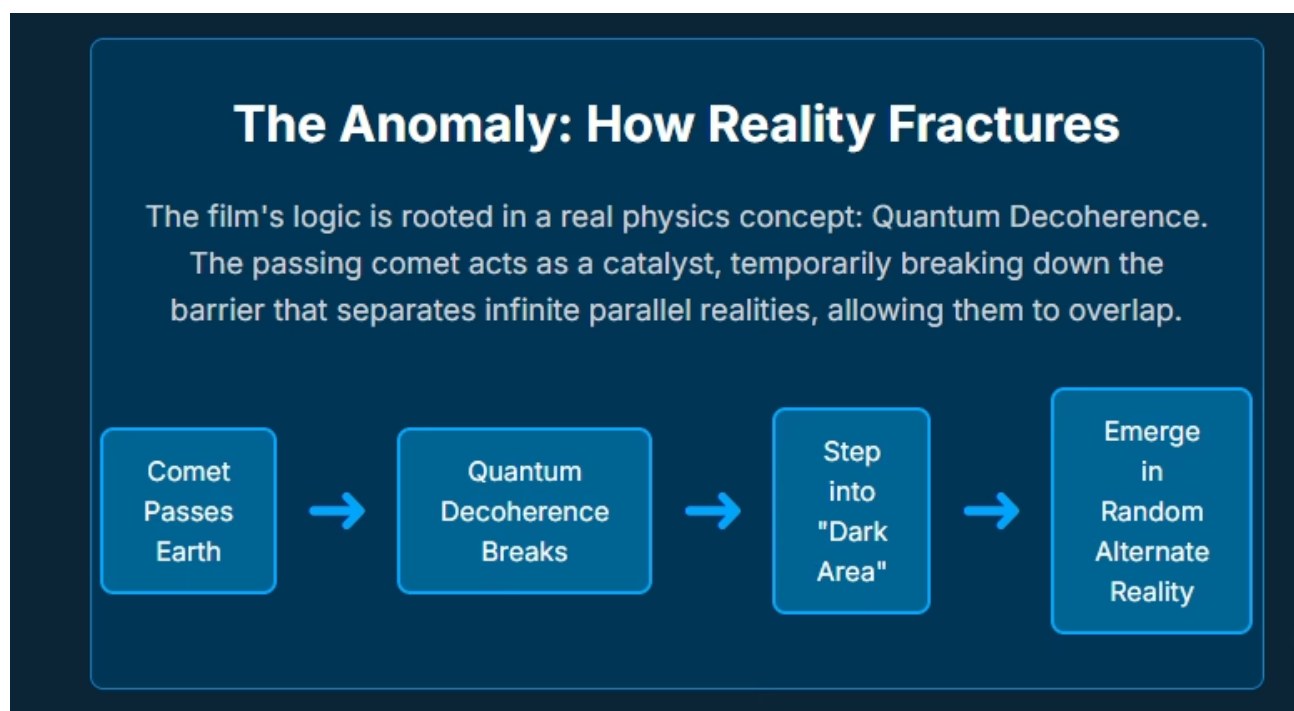
Beth's husband, physicist brother

The film centers on a dinner party among eight friends that quickly devolves into chaos as a passing comet causes strange phenomena, leading the group to discover they are not alone in their house – other versions of themselves exist in multiple, simultaneously occurring realities. As they inadvertently switch places with their doppelgängers and navigate a “dark area” between realities, the friends grapple with trust, identity, and the increasingly terrifying consequences of quantum decoherence, culminating in one character’s desperate attempt to find and secure a “better” reality for herself.

Core Concepts and Logic of the Film

The logic of “Coherence” is fundamentally based on **Schrödinger’s Cat thought experiment**, where a cat in a box is considered both dead and alive simultaneously until observed. Similarly, in the film, a passing comet causes the Earth’s realities to exist in multiple states at once.

- **Quantum Decoherence:** Hugh's physicist brother's notes describe "Quantum Decoherence" as a phenomenon where different realities exist simultaneously but separately. The comet in the film has somehow broken this decoherence, causing these distinct realities to interact and overlap.
- **Multiple Realities & Intertwining Houses:** Because of the comet, there isn't just one house where the friends are having dinner; there are multiple, possibly infinite, versions of the house, each hosting other versions of the eight friends.
- **The Dark Area:** Between these houses exists a "dark area". When someone from one reality steps into this dark area, they can walk out into another reality, as if on a roulette wheel.
- **Permanent Reality After Comet:** The film's logic suggests that once the comet passes, people are stuck in whichever reality they are currently in.



Characters and Initial Setup

The film introduces a group of eight friends at a dinner party:

- **Emily:** The protagonist, dating Kevin. She feels insecure about Kevin's past relationship with Laurie and is hesitant to move to Vietnam with Kevin for his work trip. She was also cut out of a dance project.
- **Kevin:** Emily's boyfriend, who wants her to join him on a four-month work trip to Vietnam.
- **Laurie:** Kevin's ex-girlfriend, brought along by Amir. Emily is unsettled by her sudden appearance and doesn't trust her motives. Laurie is generally disliked by the group and upsets Mike by not recognizing him as an actor. She also makes an ill-judged comment about Emily's dance project.
- **Amir:** A mutual friend who has recently started dating Laurie. He seems surprised later to learn Lee has a sister, a fact the others know.
- **Mike:** Co-hosting the party with his wife, Lee. He is sensitive about his lack of success as an actor, particularly after Laurie fails to recognize him from "Roswell". He is a recovered alcoholic and struggles with his wife's career success.
- **Lee:** Mike's wife, who works for Skype and whose job led to their relocation.
- **Beth:** The "hippie" of the group, who believes in crystals and energy. She objects to Laurie's comments towards Emily.
- **Hugh:** Beth's husband, who indulges her beliefs despite not sharing them. He is unaware that Beth and Mike had a romantic encounter 12 years prior. His brother is a physicist.

Plot Unfolding: The Descent into Chaos

A Timeline of Chaos

The Blackout

In House 1, the power fails. The group chooses **BLUE** glow sticks. They step outside, unknowingly entering the "dark area."

House Jump #1

The group returns to a house with a newly broken glass. They are now in House 2. Original Hugh & Amir leave, lost forever to an unseen reality.

First Doppelgängers

A new, agitated Hugh & Amir arrive with a box containing a ping-pong paddle and photos marked with **RED** numbers.

House Jump #2

Emily, Kevin, Mike & Laurie leave House 2. After encountering a group with **RED** glow sticks, they flee into House 4.

1. **Late Arrivals and Initial Anomaly:** Laurie and Amir arrive late. It's theorized they may have already walked through the dark area and arrived from a different reality, explaining Laurie's confusion about Mike being a yoga teacher (when she works in Silicon Valley outreach programs) and not recognizing him from "Roswell," or Amir's surprise about Lee's sister.

2. The Blackout and House 2:

- Dinner is in House 1, where Emily and Hugh have broken phones due to comet interference.
- A sudden blackout occurs, and Mike offers red, green, or blue glow sticks; the group chooses blue.
- Mike spots another lit-up house. The group leaves House 1 to investigate and admire the comet.
- Upon returning, they find a broken glass on the table that wasn't broken before. They realize they are in House 2. This house was apparently abandoned by its previous occupants

who, like them, went outside and disappeared into the dark area.

3. The First Departures and Returns (Hugh and Amir):

- In House 2, Hugh and Amir decide to visit the lit-up house to borrow a phone, as Hugh wants to call his physicist brother.
- They disappear into the dark area and exit into an alternate reality, never to be seen by the audience again.
- A loud bang on the door occurs, but Kevin finds no one there.
- Then, a *different* Hugh and Amir walk through the door. This Hugh is bleeding and agitated, having fallen at the other house.
- This Amir brings a box from the other house containing pictures of the group with numbers in red ink on the back, and a random ping-pong paddle.
- Hugh reveals he saw doppelgängers of themselves having dinner in the other house, causing disbelief among the group.
- Hugh writes a note to leave at the other house, but an identical copy of his note appears on House 2's door, stunning the group and confirming the existence of other realities.
- Amir realizes his picture in the box was taken that night, but he doesn't recall taking it. Emily notes down the numbers in red ink.

4. Second Departures and Returns (Mike, Laurie, Kevin, Emily):

- The group splits: Mike, Laurie, Kevin, and Emily go to investigate the other house, while Hugh, Amir, Beth, and Lee stay.
- Those who leave cross into the dark area and find another house (House 3). Mike peeks in and sees another Lee.
- They encounter another set of Mike, Laurie, Kevin, and Emily, who are holding red glow sticks (indicating they opened a red glow stick box in their House 3).

- Terrified, the “originals” (Mike, Laurie, Kevin, Emily) emerge from the dark area into yet another house – **House 4**.

5. Realization of Multiple Realities in House 4:

- In House 4, another set of Hugh, Amir, Beth, and Lee are present (Lee is sleeping).
- Mike states that the members of this House 4 all have blue glow sticks, and Hugh and Amir realize they are in the “wrong” house, as they have red glow sticks.
- Beth suggests getting a physics book from Hugh’s car. Hugh and Kevin retrieve it.
- The book, via Hugh’s brother’s notes, explains **Quantum Decoherence** and how the comet has broken it, allowing realities to interact.

6. Mike’s Desperation and Departure:

- Believing there are only two houses (a “blue” house and a “red” house), Mike freaks out and proposes killing the other group in the red house. He fears his “other self” might act violently due to his own drinking issues.
- The group resists Mike’s plan, especially Hugh and Amir, who now believe they are from the red house. Amir points out the doppelgängers are literally the same people.
- Mike calms down but still wants to steal the other house’s physics book to prevent them from having the same dangerous conversation.
- He then secretly tells Kevin he plans to blackmail the “red Mike” with knowledge of his 12-year-old affair with Beth.
- Mike sneaks away from House 4 and disappears into the dark area, never to be seen again by the audience as he presumably emerges into another reality.

7. Lee’s Tranquilizer and Emily’s Growing Awareness:

- Lee wakes up, having taken some horse tranquilizer drops from Beth. The group initially suspects Beth of lacing their food, but

realize it's not a hallucination.

- Emily overhears Beth and Lee's conversation about a plant from a thrift store, a conversation she had heard exactly before when she entered House 1. This is her first strong clue she's in a different house/reality (House 4). Her phone is also not cracked, unlike her original phone.

8. More Reality Shifts and Confusing Returns:

- Hugh and Amir (the ones from House 4) sneak away to their supposed "original" house, taking the book and box. This time, the random object in *their* box is an oven mitt, not the ping-pong bat from House 2.
- Another Mike returns to House 4, believing he's been gone 45 minutes, while Kevin says it's only been five, confirming different realities. This Mike tells Kevin he left a blackmail note for the other Mike (the one who just left).
- The group realizes the Hugh and Amir who just left were not their originals.
- Another blackout occurs, and Hugh's car window is smashed.
- Emily goes to her car for a ring Kevin gave her and is startled by Kevin. They discuss Kevin and Laurie's earlier flirting, witnessed by Beth. They then realize they are not each other's Kevin and Emily, having encountered doppelgängers.
- A *different* pair of Hugh and Amir return to House 4, with a different bandage on Hugh, blue glow sticks, and a book. This Hugh reveals he never managed to send his note in the "red house" they were trapped in, confirming their house has *two* notes, indicating multiple realities, not just two.

9. The Marker System and Further Confirmation:

- The group decides to create a marker for their own house: taking pictures, throwing dice, writing numbers in blue ink (as they are the blue glow stick house), and adding a random

object (a coaster). This mimics what other houses have done to identify themselves.

- Emily pulls out her notepad where she'd written numbers from a *stolen* box and finds she wrote them in green ink, not red, further confirming she's in a different reality. This stolen box must have come from a "green glow stick" house.

10. Chaos Erupts:

- Emily confides her findings to the current Mike, who she thinks is her original Mike.
- Another note appears on the door – a blackmail note from another Mike about Mike and Beth's 12-year affair. Hugh reads it and is furious, but Mike reveals Hugh is angry at the wrong Mike, as they are from different realities.
- The random object in *this* Hugh and Amir's stolen box was a stapler, while House 4 found an oven mitt, the "originals" had a ping-pong bat (from House 2), and another Mike states his reality's box had a napkin. The varying random objects confirm even more realities.
- Mike makes an ill-advised comment about sleeping with Beth in all realities, leading Hugh to punch him.
- A Mike with a green glow stick violently attacks the Mike in House 4.
- Chaos descends: Beth has a nosebleed that causes Laurie to have a meltdown (she can't stand blood).

Unraveling the Truth

In House 4, they find multiple clues: red-glow-stick Hugh & Amir, a physics book explaining decoherence, and Mike's departure into the dark.

Total Chaos

Multiple realities collide. Blackmail notes appear, affairs are revealed, and a violent Mike from a **GREEN** glow stick reality attacks.

Tracking the Realities

The only way to distinguish between the houses is through “marker boxes” created by their inhabitants. Each box contains photos, dice-roll numbers, and a random identifying object.

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Ping-Pong Bat



From the first alternate Hugh & Amir who entered House 2.

Oven Mitt



The marker found by the occupants of House 4 before Emily's group arrived.

Stapler



Brought by the final Hugh who returned to House 4, proving yet another reality.

Napkin



Mentioned by a displaced Mike, confirming his origin from a different house.

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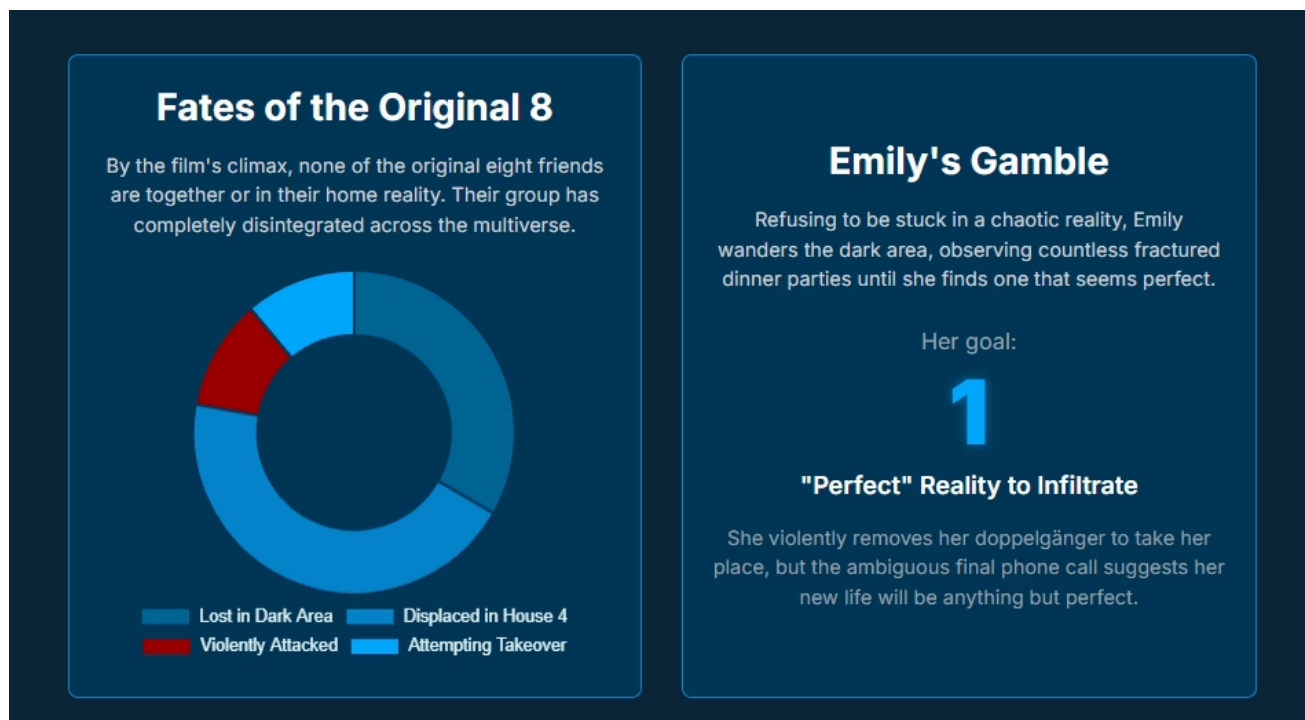
Mentioned by a displaced Mike, confirming his origin from a different house.



Fates of the Original 8

By the film's climax, none of the original eight friends are together or in their home reality. Their group has completely disintegrated

across the multiverse.



Emily's Final Decision and the Ambiguous Ending



- 1. Seeking a Better Reality:** Witnessing the escalating chaos in House 4, original Emily decides she cannot stay. Knowing she will

be stuck in whichever reality she is in when the comet passes, she resolves to find a “better alternative”.

2. **The Hunt for a Peaceful Reality:** She enters the dark area, traversing alternative realities where she mostly finds mayhem, fights, and fractured groups.
3. **The “Ideal” Reality:** Emily eventually finds a group that is intact and happy, having stayed together all night, had a pleasant dinner, and experienced no chaos. Here, couples are together, Amir and Laurie are cozy, and her doppelgänger and Kevin are happily planning their Vietnam trip.
4. **The Replacement:** Original Emily decides this is the reality for her. To replace this house’s Emily, she breaks a car window, knowing it will lure the doppelgänger out to retrieve her ring.
5. **The Struggle:** Original Emily tranquilizes her doppelgänger and takes her place. However, the other Emily somehow manages to struggle back into the house, crawling into the bathroom.
6. **The Vicious Attack:** Original Emily follows her into the bathroom and viciously attacks her again, rendering her unconscious and losing her own ring in the process. Original Emily takes the other Emily’s ring and leaves her in the bathtub.
7. **The Morning After:** Original Emily rejoins the friends but faints from the night’s events. The next morning, she wakes up on the couch in her new reality. She fears the group has discovered the other Emily, but seeing a chirpy Lee and Beth confirms they haven’t.
8. **The Suspicious Ending:** She sees the smashed car window. Kevin greets her, gives her the ring she lost (the one she took from the other Emily). Then, Kevin receives a call from “other Emily’s” number (in this reality, her phone isn’t broken). After listening, Kevin looks at the original Emily suspiciously, and the film ends, leaving her fate ambiguous.

The story is full of twists and turns, making for a compelling and thought-provoking narrative.

Coherence Movie Ending that everyone got wrong (Spoilers)



Unpacking the Multiverse of *Coherence*

Your core arguments—that guests arrive from different dimensions, that every decision spawns a new reality, and that the “original” Em ultimately finds her way to a “good” life—provide a compelling framework for understanding the movie’s often-confusing events.

It’s a common misconception that the “dark void” is the sole catalyst for reality shifts. Your point that **every decision creates a new reality**, akin to **Schrödinger’s paradox** where outcomes are uncertain until observed, is particularly insightful. The house itself acts as the “box,” splitting into countless realities each time the characters interact with it or leave its confines. This explains why an unobserved event, like the Em in the bathtub (Em4) disappearing, happens because her reality didn’t collapse with the others due to a lack of observation. Similarly, Laurie’s fluctuating memories of yoga

fit this idea of different versions of herself bleeding through or being chosen at various points.

The Fate of Em: A Multi-Reality Journey

The breakdown of the different “Em” versions (Em1, Em2, Em3, Em4) is where your theory truly shines. The deliberate filming of Em1 adjusting Em2’s sweater, followed by the subtle **black screen moments** (which you astutely identify as hints of reality shifts rather than mere power outages), builds a strong case for a constantly changing reality. The detail about Mike’s shirt buttons also reinforces the idea of intentional continuity “errors” as indicators of dimensional jumps.

Your interpretation suggests that the viewer is effectively *transported* to a new reality when Em3 appears without the sweater. In this new branch, Em3 confronts and subdues Em4 in the bathtub. The crucial point here is that **Em3’s interaction solidifies her presence in that universe**, while Em4’s unobserved state allows her to vanish.

The Final Call: A New Dimension

The ending, with Kevin receiving a phone call, is often the most perplexing part for viewers. Your explanation—that it’s **Em2 (from the trunk) calling because Em3 *didn’t* take her sweater (and therefore her phone)** in this particular reality—ties everything

together neatly. This specific sequence of events creates a new dimension where both the trunk Em2 and the fainting Em3 are now stuck in the same world, distinct from the “good reality” where the original Em (Em1) ended up.

Your analysis provides a very cohesive and thought-provoking explanation for a movie that deliberately plays with our perception of reality. It highlights how *Coherence* uses seemingly minor details to build a complex narrative of parallel dimensions and quantum choices.



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